UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/188
23 February 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 23 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, issued on 22 February 1999 (see annex I).

I also enclose a press statement from the State Department of the United States of America attesting to Ethiopia's continued violation of the moratorium on air strikes while Eritrea has so far maintained it, despite Ethiopia's daily bombing of civilian and economic targets in Eritrea (see annex II).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I

Statement by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, issued at Asmara on 22 February 1999

The first round of adventurist offensives perpetrated by the Ethiopian authorities has ended in a debacle in spite of the unrealistic expectation that was apparently placed on it by several quarters. Failure may breed more desperation. In this context, it is conceivable that the TPLF authorities could indulge in yet another round of futile adventure . For its part, the Government of Eritrea is closely monitoring these developments with utmost patience.

The level of desperation of the TPLF authorities is indeed manifested by, among other things, their recourse to continuous air-bombing of civilian targets in violation of the moratorium on air-strikes. The illegal breaking-in and occupation of the Eritrean Embassy residence in Addis Abeba by the regime's security organs is another illustration of this desperation.

But, while these illegal and inhumane acts of the Ethiopian regime are well-known, the international community has not to date taken any measures to deplore and deter them.

In spite of these realities, the Eritrean Armed Forces has opted to pursue a strategy of passive defence, firmly convinced that this is the correct approach by all standards and aware that such a posture will ultimately enhance the prospects of a peaceful solution.

The escalation of the air-bombardment by the TPLF authorities will not bring about any change on the ground. Nevertheless, the failure of the international community to condemn its acts has been a factor that has encouraged its excesses. In the event, the Eritrean Armed Forces wishes to inform all concerned that it has no option but to take appropriate measures of deterrence against these adventures. Responsibility for all the consequences rests squarely with the TPLF authorities.

Annex II

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesman

For Immediate Release February 22, 1999

STATEMENT BY JAMES B. FOLEY, DEPUTY SPOKESMAN

ETHIOPIA-ERITREA CONFLICT

The United States Government deeply regrets the use of air power by Ethiopia in the current conflict, in particular against economic targets and near civilian population centers. We urge the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to resume the moratorium immediately. We also urge the Eritrean authorities to continue to uphold their commitment to the terms of the moratorium.